

## RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

situdes of northern oil concessions, one thing may be said with certainty: they left a bitter memory in the minds of Soviet leaders. American and British attempts to secure a concession there were regarded as a proof of encircling capitalist imperialism, while the Iranian attitude was considered as disloyal and full of duplicity. The legal arguments advanced by Iran during some of these controversies made little impression on Soviet authorities. While restraining themselves from having a showdown with Reza Shah's government, the Russians were carefully registering the various manifestations of Iran's behavior in their minds. The deterioration of Western-Soviet relations in 1945 gave many evidences that Soviet leaders had a long memory. For Iran this fact proved to have, perhaps, more ominous significance than for anyone else. For reasons of its own, however, Moscow was not in a mood at this time to make immediate use of these proofs, as it considered them, of Iranian hostility.

### THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD REZA SHAH

Why did Soviet Russia practice self-restraint toward Iran? The first reason that seems quite plausible is that Russia was too busy with her internal affairs in the 1920\*8 and '30's to afford an expansionist policy abroad. Stalin's proclamation of "Socialism in one country" would lend support to this explanation. Yet this was not the only reason, as we are led to believe by an analysis of contemporary Soviet writings. Something much more profound, something of a basic theoretical character, was involved in determining Soviet attitude toward her southern neighbor. As long as Iran was ruled by the weak and degenerate Qajar dynasty, she

had a well-defined place in Marxist thinking: this was a typical semicolonial country, passing through the epoch of feudalism in its historical development and, naturally, being subjected to the exploiting practices of Western capitalism, itself in its final stage—that of imperialism. The concrete tasks facing Soviet Russia in relation to the Iran of the Qajars were thus relatively simple: precipitate a revolution, which would immediately put an end to the antiquated feudal structure of the society, and use the downtrodden masses of Iran as a great "reserve of the proletarian revolution" with a view to ousting the imperialist influences of Western capitalism. With this end in